WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for inhibiting the spread and/or reducing the risk of infection of a virus comprising contacting a virus with an inhibiting effective amount of a cathelicidin functional fragment.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the cathelicidin functional fragment comprises a peptide that is 16-36 amino acids in length; and contains the sequence NH_2-$X_1X_2X_3X_4X_5X_6$IKX_7F$X_8X_9X_{10}$LX_{11}P-COOH (SEQ ID NO:1), wherein X_1, X_2, and X_6 are individually K or R; wherein X_3 is I or K; wherein X_4 is V or G; wherein X_5 is Q or R; wherein X_7, X_9, X_{10}, and X_{11} are each individually any amino acid; wherein X_8 is L or F and wherein the polypeptide comprises antimicrobial and/or antiviral activity.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the peptide is about 16 to 20 amino acids in length.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the peptide comprises a sequence selected from the group consisting of:

(a) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVP-COOH (SEQ ID NO:13);

(b) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPR-COOH (SEQ ID NO:14);

(c) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRT-COOH (SEQ ID NO:15);

(d) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTE-COOH (SEQ ID NO:16); and

(e) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:17).

5. The method of claim 3, wherein the polypeptide is about 26 to 30 amino acids in length.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the peptide comprises a sequence selected from the group consisting of:

(a) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVP-COOH (SEQ ID NO:18);

(b) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPR-COOH (SEQ ID NO:19);

(c) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRT-COOH (SEQ ID NO:20);

(d) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTE-COOH (SEQ ID NO:21); and

(e) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:22).

7. The method of claim 2, wherein the peptide is about 27 to 31 amino acids in length.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the peptide comprises a sequence selected from the group consisting of:

(a) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVP-COOH (SEQ ID NO:23);

(b) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPR-COOH (SEQ ID NO:24);

(c) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRT-COOH (SEQ ID NO:25);

(d) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTE-COOH (SEQ ID NO:26);

(e) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:27).

9. The method of claim 2, wherein the peptide is 36 amino acids in length.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the peptide consists of the sequence NH_2-LGDFFRKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:28).

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the virus is selected from a pox virus, a herpes virus, vaccinia virus, and pappiloma virus.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the contacting is *in vivo*.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the contacting *in vivo* is by topical administration.

14. A method of treating atopic dermatitis comprising contacting a subject having or suspected of having atopic dermatitis with an inhibiting effective amount of a cathelicidin functional fragment.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the cathelicidin functional fragment comprises a peptide that is 16-36 amino acids in length; and contains the sequence NH_2-$X_1X_2X_3X_4X_5X_6IKX_7FX_8X_9X_{10}LX_{11}P$-COOH (SEQ ID NO:1), wherein X_1, X_2, and X_6 are individually K or R; wherein X_3 is I or K; wherein X_4 is V or G; wherein X_5 is Q or R; wherein X_7, X_9, X_{10}, and X_{11} are each individually any amino acid; wherein X_8 is L or F and wherein the polypeptide comprises antimicrobial and/or antiviral activity.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the peptide is about 16 to 20 amino acids in length.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the peptide comprises a sequence selected from the group consisting of:

(a) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVP-COOH (SEQ ID NO:13);

(b) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPR-COOH (SEQ ID NO:14);

(c) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRT-COOH (SEQ ID NO:15);

(d) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTE-COOH (SEQ ID NO:16); and

(e) NH_2-KRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:17).

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the polypeptide is about 26 to 30 amino acids in length.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the peptide comprises a sequence selected from the group consisting of:

(a) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVP-COOH (SEQ ID NO:18);

(b) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPR-COOH (SEQ ID NO:19);

(c) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRT-COOH (SEQ ID NO:20);

(d) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTE-COOH (SEQ ID NO:21); and

(e) NH_2-KSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:22).

20. The method of claim 15, wherein the peptide is about 27 to 31 amino acids in length.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the peptide comprises a sequence selected from the group consisting of:

(a) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVP-COOH (SEQ ID NO:23);

(b) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPR-COOH (SEQ ID NO:24);

(c) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRT-COOH (SEQ ID NO:25);

(d) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTE-COOH (SEQ ID NO:26);

(e) NH_2-RKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:27).

22. The method of claim 15, wherein the peptide is 36 amino acids in length.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the peptide consists of the sequence NH_2-LGDFFRKSKEKIGKEFKRIVQRIKDFLRNLVPRTES-COOH (SEQ ID NO:28).

24. The method of claim 14, wherein the virus is selected from a pox virus, a herpes virus, vaccinia virus, and pappiloma virus.

25. The method of claim 14, wherein the contacting is *in vivo*.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the contacting *in vivo* is by topical administration.